© *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, Volume 13, Number 3, p. 131, (2009)

Transforming the University through Community Engagement

Lakshman Yapa

Abstract

The universal belief that poverty is a matter of low income and correctable through economic growth, more jobs, and increased income is precisely why poverty has persisted in the United States and elsewhere. We view the poor as those not yet in the middle class, but it can be shown that not all the poor can join the middle class, even in the richest country in the world. Through a project titled Rethinking Urban Poverty: Philadelphia Field Project, students and faculty at Pennsylvania State University, working together with community residents, have launched an effort to improve the quality of life in West Philadelphia. Traditionally, issues of poverty were dealt with through state welfare programs and corporate jobs. In contrast, the Penn State approach emphasizes the household economy, focusing on improving quality of life, reducing the cost of living, and creating jobs that cater to the everyday needs of household members.

Introduction

This article describes a Pennsylvania State University public scholarship course titled Rethinking Urban Poverty: The Philadelphia Field Project, begun in 1998, implemented each year in a neighborhood of West Philadelphia, and offered in partnership with several community organizations. The initiative gave new meaning to the concept of "partnership," because community residents helped us rethink urban poverty in totally different ways. In West Philadelphia over 27 percent of the people are officially poor *(U.S. Census Bureau 2000)*. The old solution of good jobs and higher incomes is not working in West Philadelphia. Over the years, with the help of local residents, we began to ask, "Is it possible to improve the quality of life in the community when we know that new jobs and more money may not be there?" Ultimately, the residents identified three critical concepts: *health, dignity,* and *community.* Instead of asking why households do not make more income, Rethinking Urban Poverty: The Philadelphia Field Project asks direct questions about quality of life: why do poor households have problems with health, nutrition, housing, transport, and related matters? What does it take to live in a healthy

body, with dignity, and in a supportive community? The answers we get to these questions are very different from answers associated with more conventional approaches.

Our main community partners are West Parkside Community Development Corporation, the Millennium Baptist Church, and the West Philadelphia Financial Services Institution, a community bank. As part of a year-long Penn State course on public scholarship, each year students spend a part of the summer living in a house provided by the Millennium Baptist Church. Since 1998, in collaboration with our community partners, students have implemented over sixty academic and practical projects related to topics such as community credit cooperatives, urban gardening and nutrition, access to public transport, building safe streets, youth esteem and consumption, youth sex education, and Internet marketing of inner-city artifacts *(Pennsylvania State University Department of Geography)*. Each student was challenged to find agency within his or her academic major at a scale correlated to the power they have in the world.

"Rethinking Urban Poverty did not follow the typical outreach model [but] . . . became central to the production of new knowledge built on a new epistemology of how we know the poor."

In many respects, Rethinking Urban Poverty did not follow the typical outreach model of the university reaching out to the community *(Bridger and Alter 2006)*. Instead, the partnership became central to the production of new knowledge built on a new epistemology of how we know the poor. This, in turn, reached back and changed some existing courses and created opportunities for new courses throughout the university. At Penn State there is a new learning unit called the Laboratory for Public Scholarship and Democracy and a new interdisciplinary minor in civic engagement *(Eberly and Cohen 2006)*. Contributions to service-learning are now recognized as one of the criteria to be used in the faculty tenure review process in the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences. Our project is also consistent with Penn State's legacy of engagement as seen in our involvement with the Kellogg Commission's *Returning to Our Roots: The Engaged Institution (1999, 9)*:

> By engagement we refer to institutions that have redesigned their teaching, research, and extension and service

functions to become even more sympathetically and productively involved with their communities.

A New Social Theory for Rethinking Poverty

The need for a new approach

The conventional approach to poverty practiced at universities around the country defines poverty as an economic problem that can be corrected through the corporate sector creating more jobs and higher incomes, thus enabling an expansion of the middle class; however, history shows that such solutions have offered little help to the long-term resolution of the problem *(Ehrenreich 2001)*. Despite the many trillions spent on poverty programs over the last fifty years, more than one in ten people in the United States remain officially poor; this in the greatest wealth-producing engine ever created in human history. Furthermore, there is a lack of incentive for firms like IBM, Microsoft, Nike, and General Electric to come to impoverished areas in the United States, such as West Philadelphia, to create high-wage jobs when a global economy offers them easy access to cheap labor overseas for a fraction of what they pay workers at home *(Dorgan 2006)*.

The Obama administration's new task force to expand the middle class in the United States announces boldly on its Web page that "A strong middle class = A strong America" *(Vice President of the United States, Middle Class Task Force 2009)*. Opinions vary on exactly how much a U.S. family would have to earn to enter the middle class. For the sake of argument, let us assume that $40,000 a year is a middle-class income since this is approximately what an individual would earn at $20 per hour working for 40 hours a week, 52 weeks in the year. Nearly half the families in the United States earn less than $40,000 a year, and for all such families to earn this middle-class threshold income, the economy would have to generate a little under an additional trillion dollars per year.[1] Notwithstanding the implication underlying the Obama White House statement that "A strong middle class equals a strong America," it seems clear that a total wage bill of that magnitude is simply not attainable. The conventional economic growth theories of the corporate economy have not eradicated, and will not eradicate, poverty in the United States. It is necessary that we begin to look for answers to the problems of the poor outside the corporate framework of growth economics.

The situation in West Philadelphia

The story of West Philadelphia is truly "a tale of two cities"—one affluent and the other poor. Quiet neighborhoods of tree-lined

streets and stately mansions lie not far from desolate scenes of abandoned housing, rubble-strewn streets, graffiti-covered walls, and drug use. The University City area (home to the University of Pennsylvania as well as Drexel University) of West Philadelphia has experienced extraordinary economic growth in the last forty years, yet poverty rates in some census tracts only a few blocks away exceeded 45 percent in 2000.[2] Despite the high levels of economic distress, West Philadelphia has certain unique advantages that should have resulted in a higher level of economic development. It is home to three major universities, eleven hospitals, and about fifty schools. It has a federal- and state-sponsored enterprise zone and an industrial park. The popular Philadelphia Zoo is located on the northeast edge of West Philadelphia, which is also adjacent to two very large parks—Fairmont and Cobbs Creek. Since the 1960s, University City has received money from large federally funded urban renewal programs and continues to receive funds from the city. If the conventional wisdom on regional economic growth is correct, there should be no "poverty areas" in West Philadelphia, yet many of its residents are and will remain poor. The federally funded industrial park on West Parkside has very few occupants, and it is difficult to see how such parks can succeed in an age with increasing global outsourcing of jobs *(Yeboa 2009)*. Applying the middle-class income criterion cited earlier ($40,000 a year), for all West Philadelphia families to enter the middle class, we would need to generate over 30,000 jobs paying a total of $1.2 billon a year.[3] Using money from the Federal Empowerment Zone in West Philadelphia, a large retail complex was opened recently in the Parkside neighborhood. Even though the complex represents a great convenience to local consumers, it has not provided a large number of jobs. While it may be an admirable-sounding goal, it is clear that the Obama White House's promise to expand the middle class through corporate sector investment and job creation will not be particularly helpful in areas such as West Philadelphia.

Rethinking poverty through the household economy

Instead of only asking why households do not make more income, suppose we ask a series of specific, substantive questions, such as: why do poor households have problems with adequate nutrition, housing, transport, and health care? The answers we get to these questions are different from those that use the conventional approach; more important, they provide substantive avenues for action that offer real improvements in the quality of life, unlike

the unrealistic, economic-based proposal of expanding the middle class.

Consider the basic items of a household budget such as food, housing costs, heating, health care, and transport. Finding ways to reduce budget item costs of inner-city residents, of course, is another way of increasing their effective income. For example, we can reduce health costs through preventive measures such as regular check-ups, diet, nutrition, and exercise. Costs of heating can be reduced through incorporation of inexpensive green design principles. Commuting costs can be reduced through expansion of public transport, car pooling, use of bicycles, route planning for multipurpose trips, and telecommuting. This can be called a "focus on the household economy" approach, in contrast to the conventional "higher income through corporate investment and job creation" approach.

"[S]erving the household economy offers opportunities for job growth in nontraditional areas such as preventive health, home improvement, green building and maintenance, urban pest control, and urban agriculture."

There are three distinct advantages to this household economy approach. First, it addresses directly the question of improving the quality of people's lives. Second, by lowering the cost of living, it increases people's effective income. Third, serving the household economy offers opportunities for job growth in nontraditional areas such as preventive health, home improvement, green building and maintenance, urban pest control, and urban agriculture.

The university and the household economy

Working with Penn State University students and faculty in the future, we plan to extend the logic of the household economy to issues of food, housing, energy, and small business development. Instead of focusing on income and poverty, we will take an interdisciplinary substantive approach by asking why specific people in particular places spend what they do on meeting basic needs in the hope of finding less expensive, technically more benign, and ecologically less destructive ways of satisfying those needs. The university has the capacity to develop a new discourse that could revalorize the inner city by focusing on urban gardening, urban architecture, rebuilding homes with local effort, alternative modes

of transport, telecommuting instead of physical commuting, and creative ways of making safe neighborhoods.[4] Once one begins to ask substantive, specific questions centered on the household economy, the possibilities for agency and new discourse seem nearly limitless. Concrete examples include urban gardens *(Blair, Giesecke, and Sherman 1991)*, van pooling in Philadelphia *(Phillips 2009)*, and low-cost green building *(Lazos 2004)*.

To implement this approach we draw on the disciplinary expertise of undergraduates, graduates, faculty at the Pennsylvania State University, the staff of Penn State Cooperative Extension in Philadelphia, and numerous community organizations in West Philadelphia. Beyond improving the lives of West Philadelphians and promoting the evolution of the land-grant mission at Penn State, the significance of Rethinking Urban Poverty: The Philadelphia Field Project lies in several domains. The project challenges how we, as social scientists, academics, and policy makers, approach critical social issues and understand the role of universities in cultivating a sense of personal agency for their community partners and their students.

"The project challenges how we . . . approach critical social issues and understand the role of universities in cultivating a sense of personal agency for their community partners and their students."

Rethinking Urban Poverty inverts the traditional role of the university as expert *(Boyer 1990)*. We consciously moved away from grand theory language that talks of "the poverty problem," "the war on poverty," or "the race problem," focusing instead on the myriad of issues that encompass poverty so that students and community people were able to "find agency" at scales correlated to their own power in the world. While poverty as a larger "official" condition may be insurmountable, students and residents find agency when they speak at specific levels such as nutrition, farmers markets, urban gardens, credit cooperatives, and programs for stress reduction. We encourage students to undertake activities that are related to their major fields of study and their own skills in consultation and collaboration with the local residents. This realization of agency gave new relevance to our students' education and their academic skills and the need for drastic rethinking of the university curriculum.

A Brief History of the Philadelphia Field Project

The relationship between the university and the community in Rethinking Urban Poverty rests in shared expertise and shared agency. We argue that the historic knowledge produced by universities focused on economic growth ultimately served as a causative agent of poverty because it prevented us from looking elsewhere for creative solutions *(Yapa 1996)*. Working in partnership with the community, we were able to transcend the limits of that approach and produce a different kind of understanding of "the poor."

Since the project started in 1998, the key players in the partnership have changed over three periods. Rethinking Urban Poverty was started in 1998 by the author, working out of the Department of Geography and using internal university funds from the Honors College and the Office of Undergraduate Education at Penn State. Our introduction to the community came from a group of Quakers who ran the Friends Workcamp in West Philadelphia. Our original community partners were the Lancaster Avenue Business Association and a drug rehabilitation center run by Quakers. In 2002, a group of faculty at Penn State received a three-year grant from AmeriCorps in Philadelphia to do community development work in West Philadelphia. We formed a new organization called BelCUP (Belmont Community University Partnership). With the funds we hired three AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers trained in computer technology, community liaison, and enterprise development. The Penn State faculty involved came from the Department of Landscape Architecture, the College of Information Technology, the College of Education, and the Department of Geography. We worked with three community groups: the Lancaster Avenue Business Association, the Holly Street Garden and Literacy Association, and the Belmont Improvement Association. With the help of the three VISTA volunteers, we accomplished several individual projects, but supervising VISTA staff resident in Philadelphia placed enormous burdens on faculty time, as our campus is nearly four hours away from the project sites. Also, there was significant friction among the three community organizations, which reflected local micropolitics and personality clashes. As Penn State faculty and students, our capacity to intervene as mediators in conflict resolution was, and is, very limited. Consequently, at the end of three years, when AmeriCorps funding ended, we dissolved the partnership.

In 2006 the third phase of the project began under the continued leadership of Professor Yapa. The main community site was moved from Belmont to the Parkside neighborhood. The early

collaboration with the Lancaster Avenue Business Association has continued, and we now have three new strong community partners: Parkside Community Development Corporation, the Millennium Baptist Church, and the West Philadelphia Financial Services Institution. It is difficult to overstate the extent to which our work has been facilitated by the excellent working relationship among our three main community partners, a relationship that exists primarily because several residents work in all three organizations; there is little evidence of internal tension or conflict. That kind of organizational cohesion was not there in the BelCUP phase of our project.

Over the years, we developed a set of criteria to identify community partnerships that had high potential for successful collaboration. Like most Philadelphia neighborhoods, the area has a large number of community organizations that needed help in capacity building. But we learned that it was important to be selective and then do trial engagements before entering into more formal partnerships. During the summer, students live in a property owned by the Millennium Baptist Church, complete with Internet facilities. Residents from the neighborhood frequently visit the house, sharing meals and inquiring after the safety and welfare of the students. As one manifestation of the strength of our community connections, we have been able to provide reasonable safety for Penn State students mainly because of the acceptance and hospitality they have received from the residents of the immediate neighborhood. As a part of ongoing reciprocity, in 2007 we launched a new program to bring a group of young people from the neighborhood between the ages of ten and fifteen to Penn State's University Park campus for a weekend outing at a nature conservancy facility owned by the university. Penn State pays the entire cost of this aspect of the project. As another indicator of shared ownership and agency, university faculty and community leaders work as a group to make the main decisions concerning the directions of the partnership. The more routine decisions concerning research are left to the individual faculty and students and their community mentors.

"As another indicator of shared ownership and agency, university faculty and community leaders work as a group to make the main decisions concerning the directions of the partnership."

Impacts of the Philadelphia Field Project

On community partners. Throughout the years of collaboration, there have been many impacts on the West Philadelphia neighborhood. The following is a small sampling that indicates the scope and nature of the projects.[5]

Parkside and its immediate neighborhoods have no commercial banks, although there are a large number of places where one can cash a check for a significant fee. One of our students researched the history of the community credit cooperative movement in the United States and wrote a feasibility paper for creating such a cooperative at Parkside. The idea was discussed at a community meeting, and subsequently the Millennium Baptist Church established a credit cooperative and recently purchased a building in the neighborhood for an office. The establishment of the cooperative was done entirely on the initiative of the Baptist Church and its congregation.

Penn State partners have developed multipurpose transportation routes using a geographical information system (GIS). With funding from Penn State Outreach, the team developed software to help residents of Parkside use information about access to services such as schools and day care when accepting particular jobs in the city. More efficient multipurpose trips save time and money for residents. The computer system with this GIS software is installed at the office of the Parkside Community Development Corporation with a local employee trained to operate the system.

Penn State faculty and students have also developed a Web page for the Lancaster Avenue Business Association (http://www.thelaba-cdc.org/LABA/Businesses.htm) and trained people in its maintenance. The Web site is a great source of pride for many of the businesses on Lancaster Avenue. In another project, Penn Staters worked with a local African American Muslim woman to launch an Internet-based business selling dolls clad in Islamic-style clothes, a specific example of cultural capital that translates into economic capital without the need of any corporate or government intervention.

One student explored how race and class were insinuated into the spatial distribution of fire services in Philadelphia *(Massaro 2007)*. The city fire department locates fire services so that every household is within half a mile of a firefighting service. Even though such a spatial distribution appears to be just, a close examination of the actual need for fire services revealed that the location of fire stations was far from equitable. The occurrence of fires correlates

closely to socioeconomic characteristics of a neighborhood. In the wealthier northeastern edge of Philadelphia the engines answer approximately 250 calls a year; that is, less than one day. In the poorer sections of West Philadelphia, there is a far greater need for fire services, with engine trucks answering approximately 3,000 calls a year, almost ten a day. Judging by need, it was very clear that the existing spatial distribution of fire services was far from equitable. Using GIS and sets of weights corresponding to different criteria of fairness, a series of maps was produced showing potential spatial distributions of fire services that were far more equitable and socially just. This study also makes a larger point consistent with the underlying philosophy of the Philadelphia Field Project, that the traditional approach of higher income and more jobs is not the only way to improve the quality of life in impoverished neighborhoods. Helping to increase the capacity of existing fire stations or adding a few more stations in the area is also a specific instance in which we as academics can find agency in adding to the quality of life for West Philadelphia residents.

Another student, working under the mentorship of a Parkside resident and award-winning gardener James Stanley, developed a project focused on making compost from kitchen scrap. He created an inexpensive compost bin and companion brochure that he promoted at several community meetings. By encouraging gardening and the local production of food, the project addresses the critical issues of access to fresh, affordable produce and all of the associated health benefits.

Recently a new project was launched in urban agriculture. For many years the Department of Horticulture at Penn State has done research on plastic-covered greenhouses called high tunnels *(Pennsylvania State University Center for Plasticulture 2008)*. In the summer of 2009, with Penn State expertise, several high tunnel units will be installed in empty lots in West Philadelphia, enabling winter cultivation of flowering plants and vegetables in abandoned lots for the use of community residents. In addition, the two anchor stores in the new retail complex of West Philadelphia, Lowes Home Improvement and Shop-Rite Groceries, have expressed a willingness to purchase local produce from the high tunnels. This project is a powerful example of how by asking a different set of questions and by engaging with the needs and resources of the community beyond the limited conventional economic approach, we can adapt the retail corporate sector to the needs of the household economy.

On university students. Among the many lessons, both personal and academic, that we hope students leaving the Philadelphia Field

Project take away, the most relevant to the university is that the knowledge that the university has produced in the past about poverty is an integral part of why the problem persists. We teach our students that the concept of poverty is an academic abstraction that groups together myriad different material, social, and mental conditions—diseased bodies, substandard houses, boarded-up and empty homes, abandoned rubble-strewn vacant lots, unsafe streets, latchkey kids, long commutes, single-parent families, mental stress, and feelings of lack induced by endless exposure to commercial advertising. The list is endless. It does not help clarify the problem (nor lead to any viable long-term solutions) to conceptually group all that together and call it poverty. By grouping a number of very disparate things, we—whether academic social scientists, Washington policy makers, or any other actor in the vast array of poverty "experts"—have created a metanarrative, an impregnable Rock of Gibraltar, in whose presence we are powerless, particularly when there is no grand answer to match the grand problem of "poverty." The students understand this as an example where our own intellect has robbed us of agency and annihilated the power we posses to act in the world.

Power, very broadly, is of two types—sovereign and nonsovereign *(Foucault 1990)*. Sovereign power is that possessed by the state and deployed by kings, presidents, prime ministers, the Congress, City Hall, or any poverty "expert," best exemplified in Hobbes's "The Leviathan" *(1982)*. Nonsovereign power is that possessed by all of us. It is our power to act in the world though our knowledge, skills, and competencies, without needing the intervention of an expert panel of policy makers or academic institutions. Nonsovereign power is fundamental to the way the Philadelphia Field Project thinks about poverty. Once we understand that there is no large single economic condition called poverty, we begin to think differently about our own agency and the power we possess to act in the world. Nonsovereign power flows directly out of our new altered consciousness of "what exactly is poverty." By reimagining the myriad discursive material spaces in which we can be effective, we allow nonsovereign power to rise up in capillary fashion *(Foucault 1990)*.

"Once we understand that there is no large single economic condition called poverty, we begin to think differently about our own agency and the power we possess to act in the world."

Since 1998, students of the Philadelphia Field Project in partnership with the community have implemented projects both academic and practical, projects related to such diverse topics as community credit cooperatives, urban gardening and nutrition, access to public transport, building safe streets, youth self-esteem and consumption, youth sex education, and Internet marketing of inner city artifacts.[6] In each case, the student was challenged to find agency within his or her academic major at a scale correlated to the nonsovereign power that student possessed in the world. Through the project, our students undertake research activities to improve health though diet, nutrition, exercise, urban gardens, community-supported agriculture, and education for preventive health care, targeting specific challenges such as Type II diabetes, atherosclerosis, and hypertension. These collaborations foster dignity indirectly by empowering community members to address the material challenges they face in health, nutrition, housing, safe streets, and other aspects of their lives.

On the university as an institution

This collaboration has also had a broad range of impacts on our university community. The Rethinking Urban Poverty project has changed the epistemology of how poverty is understood by academics in the Departments of Economics, Geography, and Sociology. Beyond this critical but theoretical level, it has promoted the concept of public scholarship and service-learning in ways that have transformed Penn State structure and policy *(Yapa 2006)*. Once the understanding of poverty is transformed in this manner, the link between the university and the community becomes obvious. The university is one of the most important institutions in the world, for it alone has the capacity to challenge our imagination; it alone has its vast reserves of skills, competencies, and personnel; and it alone through its colleges, departments, and institutes has a unique organizational structure for deploying nonsovereign power in a manner few other institutions can. There is a very interesting one-to-one mapping between the disciplinary structure of the university and problem elements of our society.

As part of the Rethinking Urban Poverty project, there is now a much larger effort in engaged scholarship across the university, led by the Laboratory for Public Scholarship and Democracy *(Eberly and Cohen 2006)*. Functioning as both a formal administrative unit and an academic community, it sponsors service-learning and public scholarship efforts. The new initiatives include the American Indian Housing Initiative, Engineers for a Sustainable World,

Committee for Community Directed Research and Education, and HIV/AIDS Prevention Initiative. Rethinking Urban Poverty pioneered public scholarship courses offered at Penn State, with efforts now broad enough to sustain an intercollege minor in civic and community engagement offered at University Park and six commonwealth campuses of Penn State.

Historically, at many research institutions, community engagement projects are not a typical factor in tenure consideration. However, with the success and recognition of courses such as Rethinking Urban Poverty, there is a new climate in the tenure review process. At Penn State, for example, in the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences, there is now a category known as the "scholarship of teaching and learning," which goes beyond the traditional criteria of being a good teacher in the classroom to include off-campus activities in service-learning.[7]

Lessons Learned

During its ten years of existence, the Rethinking Urban Poverty project has faced several challenges. First, there is no rule book to guide the university when the community partners feud and compete with each other. The challenges are compounded when the partners expect university faculty to act as neutral arbitrators in the conflict. It is difficult to summarize the lesson learned here other than to say that university personnel should minimize their involvement in the micropolitics of the community *(Kretzmann and McKnight 1993)*. Second, because the project has a residential component, much thought had to be given to planning living arrangements: the location of the house, living conditions, and physical safety of the students. Third, the distance from the project site in Philadelphia to University Park in State College, Pennsylvania, definitely hampered our progress. It increased our costs in time and money and made coordination and supervision difficult. Ideally, the selected community should be very near the university. Fourth, a principal objective of Rethinking Urban Poverty is not only to improve the living conditions in the community, but also to change the epistemology through which the university understands the community. However, most evaluators insist on substantial metrics of community impact, ignoring or undervaluing the equally essential impact on the university itself. This expectation comes from the false dichotomy that exists between the problem and the nonproblem. It is thought that "the poverty problem" exists solely in the community; the university is automatically seen as the "nonproblem" and the solution. However, as we have argued

in this article, the poverty discourses produced in the university are an integral part of why we have failed to affect the problem in a significant and sustained way. In fact, changing the university (and how poverty is studied, talked about, and understood) may be more important than a listing of the material accomplishments in the community *(Yapa 2006)*. Finally, not only must the university's understanding of itself as the solution change, but so must the community's understanding of its own condition. In the long run, a change in cultural values and discursive practices of how the community understands poverty and what to do about it are more important than the numerical counts of the number of houses built, jobs created, or empty lots recovered.

Conclusion

Usually academics partition our world into two units: the realm of the problem and the realm of the nonproblem. The poverty sector, poverty areas, and inner-city neighborhoods all belong to the realm of the problem. Academics, social scientists, and the university are invariably viewed as part of the nonproblem, even part of the solution. Through work in Philadelphia, we have demonstrated that this is a false and a dangerous dichotomy. The traditional model of outreach assumes that the university produces unproblematic knowledge that can be distributed to and employed in society. We have shown that the poverty discourses produced by the university are an integral part of why poverty persists. A productive engagement with poverty in a community requires an alteration of the discursive understanding of poverty, which in turn requires a fundamental transformation of the university.

Endnotes

1. Calculation made from U.S. Census 2000 data *(U.S. Census Bureau 2000)*.

2 The poverty rates in the City of Philadelphia and in West Philadelphia are 22.9 percent and 27.8 percent, respectively *(U.S. Census Bureau 2000)*.

3. Calculation from U.S. Census 2000 *(U.S. Census Bureau 2000)*.

4. For a similar conclusion related to the land-grant mission in agriculture, see Peters, Alter, and Schwartzbach *(2008)*.

5. A more complete list of student projects can be found on the Philadelphia Field Project Web page, http://www.philadelphiafield-project.com.

6. For a follow-up with alumni of the project, see M. Kaye *(2009)*.

7. A much wider national effort to launch a "scholarship of engagement" is reported in Drew et al. *(2000)*.

References

Blair, D., C. C. Giesecke, and S. Sherman. 1991. A dietary, social, and economic evaluation of the Philadelphia Gardening Project. *Journal of Nutrition Education* 23:161–67.

Boyer, E. L., 1990. *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. New York: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Bridger, J. C., and T. R. Alter. 2006. The engaged university, community development, and public scholarship. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* 11 (1): 163–78.

Dorgan, B. L. 2006. *Take this job and ship it*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.

Drew, H., J. E. Ayres, E. H. Cash, D. E. Fahnline, D. P. Gold, E. A. Gurgevich, R. O. Hermann, P. C. Jurs, D. E. Roth, J. D. Swisher, M. S. Whittington, and H. S. Wright. 2000. *UniScope 2000: A multidimensional model of scholarship for the 21st century*. University Park, PA: UniSCOPE Learning Community.

Eberly, R., and J. Cohen, eds. 2006. *A laboratory for public scholarship and democracy*. New Directions for Teaching and Learning 105. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ehrenreich, B. 2001. *Nickel and dimed: On (not) getting by in America*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

Foucault, M. 1990. *The history of sexuality*. New York: Vintage Books.

Hobbes, T. 1982. *Leviathan*. New York: Penguin Classics.

Kaye, M. 2009. Snapshots from West Philadelphia. *Penn State Outreach Magazine*, Spring, 6–7.

Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities. 1999. *Returning to our roots: The engaged institution*. Washington, DC: National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges.

Kretzmann, J. P., and J. L. McKnight. 1993. *Building communities from the inside out*. Chicago: ACTA Publications.

Lazos, Patricia. 2004. Affordable and green urban rehab housing: PATH and Habitat for Humanity Philadelphia demonstration site; 1026 South Colorado Street. http://www.greendesignetc.net/Building_04_(pdf)/Habitat%20(Lazos).pdf.

Massaro, V. A. 2007. The distribution of fire services in Philadelphia: Issues of race and class. Unpublished honors thesis, The Pennsylvania State University.

Pennsylvania State University Center for Plasticulture. 2008. High tunnels. http://plasticulture.cas.psu.edu/H-tunnels.html.

Pennsylvania State University Department of Geography. Rethinking Urban Poverty: A Philadelphia Field Project.

http://www.philadelphiafieldproject.com/.

Peters, S. J., T. R. Alter, and N. Schwartzbach. 2008. Unsettling a settled discourse: Faculty views of the meaning and significance of the land-grant

mission. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* 12 (2): 33–66.

Phillips, Karin. 2009. Phila. van-pooling organization expands as jobs become more scarce. KYW online, March 30. Philadelphia Unemployment Project. http://www.philaup.org/commuter/KYW2009_0330.html.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2000. Census 2000. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

Vice President of the United States, Middle Class Task Force. [2009]. A strong middle class. http://www.whitehouse.gov/strongmiddleclass/.

Yapa, L. 1996. What causes poverty? A postmodern view. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 86:707–28.

Yapa, L. 2006. Public scholarship in a postmodern university. In *A laboratory for public scholarship and democracy*, ed. R. Eberly and J. Cohen, 73–84. New Directions for Teaching and Learning 105. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Yeboa, A. S. 2009. Factors affecting differences in stakeholder perceptions in the success of government intervention programs: An analysis of the West Philadelphia empowerment and Ghanaian free trade zones. Schreyer College Honors Thesis in Geography, The Pennsylvania State University.

About the Author

• Lakshman Yapa is a professor of geography at Pennsylvania State University. Originally a native of Sri Lanka, he has lived and worked in the United States for most of his life. He received his doctorate in geography from Syracuse University. He has researched and consulted on issues of poverty for the World Bank, the United Nations, USAID, and for several government and nongovernmental agencies. Currently, he is the director of a ten-year-old public scholarship project, Rethinking Urban Poverty: Philadelphia Field Project, which has won numerous university and national awards, most recently the 2008 C. Peter Magrath University Community Engagement Award. For several years, Yapa has argued that problems of poverty cannot be eradicated through economic development and that the university has a central role to play in crafting new and alternative solutions.